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HOMEMAkers' CHAT

Saturday, September 16, 1939

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Subject: "ROADSIDE MARKET SUCCESS." Information from the Office of Experiment Stations, United States Department of Agriculture.

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These fall days are busy days for farm families selling their products at roadside markets. Perhaps you're one of the thousands of housewives out taking your turn at selling to passing motorists on these bright fall afternoons. Or perhaps you're one of the thousands of city housewives driving out to the country to buy fresh foods.

Whether you're selling or buying you'll be interested in some of the facts about roadside markets reported recently by the Kansas and Ohio State Experiment Stations as a result of surveys in these States.

Roadside marketing is a comparatively new business. Its big growth has come in just the last 10 years. Up to now roadside marketing has been largely an experiment. But the new surveys indicate some definite rules for success, many of them quite different from the rules for other businesses.

For example, the best times for selling by the roadside are different from selling in town. The day of rest for city markets is the busiest day of all at the roadside. On Sunday roadside markets do about a fourth of the whole week's business. Saturday is the next busiest day. And Saturday and Sunday together account for about 40 percent of the whole week's income. Monday is the third best day at the roadside. Not so many automobiles are on the road on Monday, but the motorists who buy on that day usually buy in large amounts. Apparently on Monday people drive out to the country to stock up on food for the week. Any holiday or day before a holiday is also a big day for roadside selling. On the other hand, Friday is the

9/16/39

day when most markets do the least business.

As for the hours of selling, they are different at the roadside, too. Late afternoon and early evening bring the biggest business. Almost two-thirds of the people who buy along the road stop between the hours of 3 and 8 p.m. The peak of the day's business comes between 4 and 6. Many markets don't open up until noon because so few customers stop in the morning.

Location has a lot to do with success in roadside marketing. The biggest and busiest markets usually are on main travelled highways near cities or large towns. The more traffic on the highway, the more business for the market. In both Ohio and Kansas the markets doing the most business are within 5 or 10 miles of cities. Markets at an intersection of two busy highways have the most fortunate location of all.

The right side of the road means bigger business, too. Motorists buy on their way back to town, rather than on their way out into the country. So the markets on the right side of the road going into town sell more than those on the left side.

Everything that makes it easy for motorists to stop at a market helps business. The Kansas survey showed that markets on level ground do more business than those on hillsides because motorists stop more easily on level ground. The apex of a curve in the road is a good location, too, because cars slow up around curves.

Good clear signs easy to read from some distance up the highway are of great help in bringing in business. But along with the sign an attractive colorful display of products is very helpful. The surveys showed that a good display pays, even though it means some loss of fresh products by spoilage.

Plenty of room for cars to park pays, too. Near one large Kansas city, the survey people found two very attractive markets on opposite sides of the road. One had parking space for 75 cars, the other for only 5 or 6 cars. The one with the big parking space did 20 times as much business as the other.

9/16/39

Some roadside markets specialize on a few products such as fresh vegetables, or poultry and eggs. Others sell a wide variety of products. The surveys showed that markets offering many different products bring in considerably more money. In Ohio successful markets may sell as many as 30 kinds of fresh vegetables in a season and 20 kinds of fresh fruit, as well as dairy products, fresh and smoked meats, honey and beeswax, maple products, vinegar and fruit butters, flowers and plants, home canned and baked goods, even ice cream and candy. In Kansas most of the successful markets feature fresh vegetables early in the season and cantaloupes and watermelons from August on until frost. Cantaloupes and watermelons are the big money-makers at Kansas markets.

Some markets sell only very fine products at high prices. Other markets offer cull fruits and vegetables which won't sell elsewhere. But the best business comes from selling good, fresh, though not fancy, products at reasonable prices. Above everything else city customers want freshness in the food they buy in the country. Most people who buy at roadside markets belong to the middle class. The rich who can afford to pay high prices don't bother to drive out to purchase their own food. The very poor who would buy cheap, poor-quality foods can't afford to drive out. The roadside market customers are those who want good fresh foods and can afford to pay a reasonable price. Many successful roadside markets sell at prices slightly lower than city retail prices.

These are just a few of the points for success in retail marketing brought out in reports from the Kansas and Ohio State Experiment Stations.

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